

APA May/June 2014 Newsletter

Corporate Takeover of Our Democracy

There has been a lot of talk these days about the role of unions and how the labor movement built the middle class in our country. We are fortunate at MSU to have a strong local union in the APA/MEA/NEA, giving us an equal voice at the table to negotiate any issue that impacts our wages, hours, and conditions of employment.

Yet, organized labor in our state and across the country has been under attack for decades with devastating results for the middle class. Wages have not kept up with inflation, even though American workers are the world's most productive.

When it comes to legislative changes to public employment and higher education, we have had our fair share of battles. But the most recent years have provided not only an increase in legislation being introduced but also a greater veracity to diminish our role as professionals.

We all know that we have become targets. Our very existence is being challenged. Corporate special interests are trying to strip our collective bargaining rights and eliminate our ability to collect dues. Many are trying to silence our voices and end democracy in the workplace.

These attacks have absolutely nothing to do with improving public education or advancing the middle class. Worse yet, as the effort to diminish unions receives greater financial support from a few wealthy elite, without a strong labor movement, both union and nonunion workers have no real avenue to compel employers to provide decent wages, affordable health care, and retirement security.

The current trend pushes our country to the mercy of corporations. Some anti-union organizations, like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), have been working to achieve unfettered corporate interference in the legislative process, hosting conferences with lawmakers and crafting "model" legislation to further the goals of corporate America.

Lawmakers push much of the legislation word-for-word in statehouses around the country, and here in Michigan, manipulating the democratic process. Effectively, corporate lobbyists financially support seated legislators and use them as a conduit to introduce bills in our state legislature.

Interestingly, ALEC and many other shadowy corporate lobby conglomerates are certified as a 501(c)(3) exempt non-profit. They maintain their organizations merely reimburse public officials for their work on legislation and claim it isn't lobbying but

instead educating legislators. Yet, with the media asking questions of public officials' connections to these organizations, everyday Americans are noticing how entities like ALEC are facilitating a corporate takeover of our democracy.

Are you planning for your retirement? The Retirement Plan

Security in employment includes a strong retirement plan. The members of APA are eligible for a long-term plan to save for retirement. Retirement benefits and eligibility are bargained by APA and can be found in the Collective Bargaining Agreement between MSU-APA and Michigan State University (<http://www.msuapa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/APA2011-2015.pdf>).

Eligibility

A regular staff member can begin contributing and accruing retirement funds upon employment

Retirement Plan Structure

The retirement plan is a 403(b) Base Retirement Program for regular staff working half-time or more. The employee contributes 5% of salary and the University contributes 10% of the employee's base salary or wage. The contributions are made on a tax-deferred basis.

Participation in the program is optional until the employee reaches age 35, when the contributions are required. A member may delay participation for up to twenty-four (24) full-time equivalent (FTE) service months from their date of hire or to the 35th birthday, whichever is later.

Eligibility for Retirement

An official retiree requires a minimum of 15 or more years of service and at least age sixty-two (62) or twenty-five (25) years of service at any age.

Eligibility for Retirement Health Benefits

Employees meeting the minimum official retirement requirements (and hired prior to 7/1/10) will receive a University contribution toward health, prescription, and dental coverage. The level of University contribution will be determined by the employee's full-time equivalent (FTE) service months at retirement (Article 7, Employment Status, MSU-APA/MSU Collective Bargaining Agreement).

Employees hired prior to 7/1/02	University contribution toward the premium will apply to health, prescription, and dental coverage for the retiree, spouse, and eligible dependents.
Employees hired on or after 7/1/02 and prior to 7/1/10	University contribution toward the premium will apply to health, prescription, and dental coverage for the retiree only. The retiree may elect to continue coverage for spouse and eligible dependents by paying the applicable premium.
Employees hired on or after 7/1/10	The retiree may elect to continue coverage for the retiree, spouse, and eligible dependents by paying the applicable premium.

Additional Contributions for Employees Hired After July 1, 2010

For regular employees hired on or after July 1, 2010, the employer will make additional contributions to the MSU 403(b) Base Retirement Program. A one-time lump sum contribution will be made at the completion of 60 months of active regular continuous service; the employer will contribute to the employee's 403(b) Base Retirement Program an amount equal to 2.5% of the employee's annual wage calculated as of June 30th prior to the contribution.

After the 60th month (5 year time equivalent) time period through 120th month (10 year time equivalent) the University will contribute to the 403(b) Base Retirement Program an amount equal to one-half (1/2) percent of the employee's annual wage, calculated as of June 30th prior to the contribution, for each year of regular service.

After the 121th month (10 year time equivalent) the University will contribute (3/4) percent of the employee's per pay period salary to the MSU 403(b) Base Retirement Program.

Additional Benefits Upon Retirement

Sick Leave Payout, Article 24

Full-time employees meeting the University's minimum retirement requirements shall be paid for 50% of unused sick leave, but not to exceed a maximum of 50% of up to 1,200 hours, as of the effective date of separation.

Longevity Payment, Article 28

Full-time employees who terminate before October 1 who are 65 years of age and have five (5) or more years of full-time service, or who meet the minimum University retirement requirements will receive a prorated longevity payment.

Applying for Retirement

Prior to applying for retirement, please confirm your full-time equivalent service months and eligibility. You can then apply online:

<http://www.hr.msu.edu/benefits/retirement/SSIInstructForm.htm>

More Information

You can find more information and resources on the MSU Human Resources website

<http://www.hr.msu.edu/benefits/retirement/SSConsider.htm>

If you have any further questions on retirement, please contact the APA office at (517) 353-4898 or e-mail msuapa@msu.edu.

Questions from the Trenches

Update: January 2014 Lump Sum Bonus Payment

For this installment of APA Questions From The Trenches, we asked APA President Maury Koffman to provide an update regarding the lawsuit filed around the January 2014 Lump Sum bonus payment.

What is the status of the lawsuit?

There hasn't been a great deal of movement. At this time, the APA is working with the other staff labor unions on campus to secure payout of the remaining amount of the January 2014 lump sum payment that is currently tied up in court. With the full financial support of the Michigan Education Association (MEA), the APA has secured its own legal counsel to represent the interest of APA members and is also engaged in a cooperative effort that secured legal counsel representing the entire Coalition of Labor Organizations at MSU through all court proceedings.

How much was the lump sum payment in January 2014 reduced as a result of the pending lawsuit?

Eligible APA bargaining unit members were provided a partial payment of \$1,042 in January 2014. Of course, taxes and other applicable deductions reduced the members' take-home amount. The amount being litigated is roughly another \$300 per member and we are confident that once the lawsuit is concluded, those bargaining unit members who met the eligibility requirements in January 2014 will receive the remainder of the payment (\$300 less applicable taxes and deductions).

When can members anticipate a decision to the lawsuit?

The next hearing is slated for mid-June 2014. However, this hearing is a procedural matter and is not a full adjudicatory proceeding on the merits of the case. Following the June hearing, the APA is hopeful to have a better understanding of the anticipated calendar for a decision on the merits of the case.

What are the steps from here?

In an effort to enforce our contract as ratified, the MEA is providing full assistance to the APA and using all legal means necessary to ensure the Wage and Health Care Agreement is enforced as ratified by the APA membership and the University. The APA will continue to keep members informed of any substantive updates related to the payment.

***It is also noteworthy that under our current agreement, APA bargaining unit members are slated for another lump sum payment in January 2015. The specific dollar amount cannot be determined until the end of the 2014 calendar year under the terms of the contract.

Who should I call with my additional questions?

APA members should feel free to contact the APA office at 517.353.4898 or via email at msuapa@msu.edu with any questions or concerns.

2014 Summer Book Drive

The APA Community Based Events Ad-Hoc Committee is proud to announce the 2014 Summer Book Drive. The drive will take place from June 1st through June 30. The books will be distributed to at-risk children and families through the Capital Area Literacy Coalition: The Reading People.

The CALC is a non-profit, non-religious, volunteer literacy organization founded in 1985 and directed by Dr. Lois Bader. CALC provides a variety of services to enable people to achieve personal goals through literacy, believing the ability to read is critical to personal freedom and the maintenance of a democratic society. Further opportunities to volunteer and donate can be found at www.thereadingpeople.org.

The CBE Committee is seeking children and family friendly books as donations to support the Greater Lansing Community. Thanks to our wonderful members, drop off locations are available across campus. To donate please visit any of these locations:

Agriculture, Morrill Hall, Rm 207 Kay Barber barberk@anr.msu.edu
Angell Bldg., Room 102 Dennis Seybert seybert@msu.edu
Berkey Hall, Rm 205 Trudy Wesley wesleyt@msu.edu
Broad Business Complex, Rm 505 Debbie Richards richards@broad.msu.edu
Clinical Center, Rm B419 Jackie Botsford Jackie.Botsford@hc.msu.edu
Communications Arts & Sciences Bldg., Rm. 201 Trajan Dubiel dubieltr@msu.edu
Computer Center, Rm 220 Summer Issawi sissawi@msu.edu
Engineering Bldg., Rm 3536C Nicole Proctor proctorn@egr.msu.edu
Erickson Hall, Rm 501 Angel Boshea boshea@msu.edu
Fee Halls, A314 Pat Grauer Pat.Grauer@hc.msu.edu
International Center, Rm 7 Laura Wise lauraw@msu.edu
Kellogg Center, Rm 93 Cindy Helms chelms@msu.edu
Library (Main), Circulation Desk Susan Garmo garmo@mail.lib.msu.edu
Linton Hall, Rm 317B Dawn Lehman lehman@msu.edu
Natural Science Bldg., Rm 107 Pat Sutherland suther24@cns.msu.edu
Nisbet Bldg., Main Lobby Todd Bradley bradl264@hr.msu.edu
Olds Hall, Rm 101 Venice Smith smithde4@pres.msu.edu
Olin Health Center, Rm 355 Erica Phillipich Erica.Phillipich@hc.msu.edu
Secchia Center, Ste 450 Cynthia Vincent Cynthia.Vincent@hc.msu.edu
Student Services Bldg., Rm 339 Juan Flores-Soto floresj2@msu.edu
Wells Hall, Rm C-715 Judy Miller miller@math.msu.edu

APA Annual Picnic

2014 APA Annual Picnic is scheduled for Thursday, May 29, 2014. This member event will be held under the Pavilion at Patriarche Park – [1100 Alton Street](#) in East Lansing from 4:30pm to 7:00pm.

Relax, network, and have fun! Food and beverages will be provided. Bring the whole family to the festivities. There will be fun activities for kids of all ages.

Please direct questions to Nick Bourland: bourlan2@msu.edu
We hope to see you there!

Saving Money Through Your Membership

Are you getting the most out of your APA membership? Many members are aware of the contract, benefits, and representation and just-cause protections guaranteed by their union membership, but may not know of the opportunities for savings we gain as members of MEA & NEA. Free or discounted services for life/home/auto insurance, shopping, dining, wireless plans, travel and more can be accessed through your membership card. APs have been known to recoup the equivalent of their dues through the savings programs offered to MEA/NEA members.

Free Life Insurance – Members are encouraged to activate their completely free life insurance policy that comes with membership. www.neamb.com/insurance/nea-complimentary-life-insurance.htm

MEA Financial Services – Purchase auto and homeowners insurance at a discount, buy annuities and mutual funds, long-term health care, and a VISA card through MEA Financial Services at www.meafs.com or [517/351-2122](tel:5173512122) or [800/292-1950](tel:8002921950).

MEA/NEA Membership Card – Use your membership card to get savings around town. Show your card at restaurants, stores, and services to receive MEA discounts. To request a replacement card, please visit www.mea.org/contact/meacard_request.html.

MEA Member Services – Locate discounts on shopping, dining, dry cleaning, and other savings online in the “Members Only” tab at www.mea.org. Have your membership number ready.

NEA Member Services – Find even more savings on financial products, travel, shopping, wireless plans, and other goods and services can be found at www.neamb.com.
Passageways Travel – Airline tickets and travel packages at low group rates and discounts, and can be reached at [800/684-7384](tel:8006847384) or [517/353-9898](tel:5173539898).